COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
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REPORT ON
UKRAINE'S REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE
AND
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

December 1, 1991

Kiev, Lviv, Kaniv
and Surrounding Regions

Prepared by the Staff
of the
U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

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Dear Friend of CSCE,

Recently, three Helsinki Commission staff members had the opportunity to observe the December 1 referendum and presidential elections in Ukraine. They traveled in various areas throughout Ukraine observing the voting and meeting with government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of political organizations and other citizens. In addition, the Commission sent another Soviet expert to Moldova for the December 8 presidential elections.

As you know, the citizens of Ukraine voted overwhelmingly in support of independence and elected Leonid Kravchuk as president. Ukraine's emergence as an independent state has had a profound impact on the European political scene, effectively ending any prospects of salvaging a federated or even confederated Soviet Union. The results of the voting provided the direct impetus for the December 8 agreement among Russia, Ukraine and Belarus to create a Commonwealth of Independent States.

In Moldova, President Snegur, the only candidate, was confirmed in office by an overwhelming plurality, as the Moldovan government attempts to contend with two secessionist movements on its territory. As a result of the attendant violence and threats of violence, an estimated 500,000 citizens of Moldova were prevented from voting.

We are pleased to send you reports on the Ukrainian and Moldovan elections and hope that you will find them informative and useful.

Sincerely,

Dennis DeConcini

DENNIS DeCONCINI
Co-Chairman

STENY H. HOYER
Chairman

SUMMARY

In an historic referendum/presidential election on December 1, 1991, residents of Ukraine overwhelmingly voted for independence and chose Leonid Kravchuk, the chairman of the republic's Supreme Soviet, as president. Hundreds of foreign observers and correspondents watched as 84 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. Over 90 percent of participants, including many non-Ukrainians, cast ballots for independence.

Former Communist Party apparatchik Kravchuk handily won the presidency on the first round, garnering about 60 percent of the votes. Among the candidates he defeated were two widely admired former dissidents and political prisoners who had served many years in Soviet prisons for advocating Ukrainian independence.

The outcome of the referendum, while expected, was nevertheless momentous. Ukraine's emergence as an independent state ended any prospects of salvaging a federated or even confederated USSR. The results of the voting provided the direct impetus for the December 8 agreement among the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus to create the Commonwealth of Independent States as the successor entity to the Soviet Union, which they formally declared dead.

The rise of Ukraine -- a large state with 52 million people, a highly developed industrial base, rich agricultural capabilities, and, not least, nuclear weapons on its territory -- also altered the geo-political map of Europe. Western capitals, observing the quickly unfolding events and grasping their ramifications, made determined efforts to stop referring to the new republic in their midst as "*the*" Ukraine, while pondering how its military plans and potential affect security arrangements in the post Cold War world.

Given the importance of Ukraine's referendum and presidential election, as well as the republic's size and regional differences, the Helsinki Commission sent three staffers to observe the voting. Ukraine's parliament had previously conveyed formal invitations to the Commission, which selected three distinct cities as representative sites to monitor the voting, gauge the popular mood and gain different perspectives on the political implications: Kiev, the capital, in central Ukraine; Lviv, the regional capital of Western Ukraine, reputedly the most highly nationalist area of the republic; and Donetsk, in Eastern Ukraine, where the population is heavily Russian or Russified. Unfortunately, logistical and transportation breakdowns in the decaying Soviet Union foiled plans to reach Donetsk, and Commission staff instead traveled to the city of Kaniv (a small city on the Dnipro river). The following report is based on staff observations over several days, and is supplemented by many conversations with voters and officials, as well as Ukrainian and central Soviet newspaper and television coverage.

BACKGROUND

On August 24, 1991, shortly following the failed coup-attempt in Moscow, Ukraine's Supreme Council (parliament) voted to declare Ukraine's independence. The declaration stated that henceforth, only the Constitution, laws, resolutions and other legislative acts of Ukraine are valid on its territory, and called for a referendum on December 1 to "support the Act declaring independence."

Well before August, the Ukrainian parliament, under pressure from the democratic opposition, was moving toward democratic, peaceful self-determination. Under *glasnost* and *perestroika*, Ukrainians increasingly asserted their cultural and political identity, spurred by the Popular Movement of Ukraine, *Rukh*, and other groups favoring Ukrainian independence. In March 1990, Ukraine held its first multi-candidate elections for parliament, in which some one-third of the new deputies were members of the democratic opposition. These deputies were instrumental in setting the agenda and encouraging moves toward greater self-determination, including laws giving the republic control over its own resources.

Such pressure was especially strong in western Ukraine, which came under Soviet control only after World War II and where nationalist sentiment ran highest. In fact, the December 1 referendum was not the first recent plebiscite on independence on Ukrainian territory: voters in the western Ukraine had displayed their support for independence during Mikhail Gorbachev's March 1991 referendum on maintaining the USSR as a federation. Three western oblasts, already controlled by non-communist forces, authorized a question on Ukrainian independence as an addition to Gorbachev's referendum question and to the question approved by Ukraine's legislature soliciting support for Ukraine's July 1990 declaration of sovereignty. Since March 1991, however, the accelerating disintegration of the USSR and central Soviet institutions, the spread of Ukrainian national feeling far beyond western regions, and the failed August putsch made possible -- and necessary -- a republic-wide referendum on independence.

After the August Declaration of Independence, Ukraine quickly passed laws on the creation of its own army, on disbanding the KGB and creating a National Security Service, on creating state frontiers, on a national guard, customs, and foreign investment. Meanwhile, republic leaders refused to sign any political union treaty: Supreme Council Chairman Leonid Kravchuk insisted that Ukraine would not enter discussions prior to the December 1 referendum about future political arrangements, including the November 14 agreement between the center and seven republics on a new Union treaty that created a confederated Union of Sovereign States. And only reluctantly did Ukraine, on November 6, initial an agreement on a now-defunct economic community with eight former Soviet republics.

Ukraine also became more active in the international arena. After August 1991, the Ukrainian Government expanded efforts to seek both bilateral and multilateral recognition, and signed several consular agreements with its neighbors. Ukraine has attempted to maintain relations with Russia while at the same time pursuing its own prerogatives. In August, Russia and Ukraine agreed to respect each other's right to independence and territorial integrity; in October, they reiterated their shared support of already-agreed nuclear and conventional arms control treaties. Meanwhile, Leonid Kravchuk traveled to the United States, Canada, and France for discussions with their heads of state about Ukraine's impending independence.

On both the domestic and international fronts, therefore, Ukraine prepared the groundwork to support the widely anticipated vote for independence on December 1. These efforts proceeded in the face of dark warnings by Mikhail Gorbachev, by the central Soviet media and, to some extent, Russian media about the difficulties and dangers Ukrainian independence would pose to Ukrainians themselves, to their neighbors and to international stability. Many Ukrainians later told Helsinki Commission staff that such attempts to intimidate them only made them more determined to see their cause through to the end.

THE REFERENDUM AND ELECTION

Referendum Procedures

The December 1 ballot on Ukrainian independence asked citizens: "Do you support the declaration of Ukrainian independence?" The responses were: "Yes, I endorse it" or "No, I do not endorse it." Voters were to cross out the response that they did not want, leaving the response they preferred. Ballots with both answers or neither one crossed out were invalid. At least 50 percent of Ukraine's 37 million voters had to participate for the results to be binding.

Presidential Election -- Procedures

The election procedures were governed by a July 1991 Resolution of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet that regulated the election procedures and appointed the Central Electoral Commission to organize and oversee the elections. The Commission formed 27 electoral districts -- one each in Crimea, the oblasts of Ukraine, and the cities of Kiev and Sevastopol. Political parties, associations and movements submitted applications to the Commission to obtain the right to nominate a presidential candidate. The Commission also approved the candidates' lists of signatures and registered the candidates themselves, as well as their authorized representatives (up to 30) by October 31.

The names of all registered candidates were on the ballot issued to voters, who were to cross out all but the name of the candidate they supported. If no names or more than one name was left uncrossed out, the ballot was considered invalid. To win the election, a presidential candidate had to receive over 50 percent of the vote cast. If no candidate received a majority, the two top vote-getters would meet in a runoff on December 15.

In order to be registered as a candidate, an individual had to obtain 100,000 signatures before October 31. Over 90 people declared themselves presidential candidates, but only seven individuals had collected the necessary 100,000 signatures by the October 31 deadline. They included a former high-ranking Communist Party functionary, two former political prisoners, a minister, a director of a cooperative, and two scientists. Four of the candidates came from the democratic opposition in the Ukrainian parliament. All seven favored an independent Ukraine and urged a positive vote in the referendum.

Presidential Election -- the Candidates

Leonid Kravchuk -- Chairman, Ukrainian Supreme Council (parliament) and formerly second secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party Central Committee in charge of ideology.

Vyacheslav Chornovil -- Member of Ukrainian parliament; Chairman, Lviv regional (oblast) council; endorsed by *Rukh*; former political prisoner and Ukrainian Helsinki Monitor; former journalist.

Levko Lukianenko -- Member of Ukrainian parliament; Chairman, Ukrainian Republican Party; former political prisoner and Ukrainian Helsinki Monitor; jurist.

Ihor Yukhnovskiy -- Chairman, Narodna Rada (democratic opposition faction in Ukrainian parliament); head, Parliamentary Commission on Education; scientist.

Volodymyr Gryniov -- Vice Chairman, Ukrainian parliament; chairman, Party for the Democratic Rebirth of Ukraine; mathematics professor; ethnic Russian from Kharkiv.

Leopold Taburiansky -- Chairman of Dnipropetrovsk-based cooperative Olymp and leader of the People's Party of Ukraine.

Oleksander Tkachenko -- Agriculture Minister of Ukraine. Tkachenko withdrew his candidacy a few days before the election.

The candidates were entitled to receive 75,000 rubles each from the parliament for their campaigns. Donations for each campaign could not exceed 150,000 rubles from outside the parliament, so no candidate could spend more than 225,000 rubles.

The Candidates' Platforms

The candidates' platforms agreed on most key issues, reflecting the influence of the democratic movement *Rukh*, as well as of the *Rukh*-affiliated Ukrainian Republican and Ukrainian Democratic parties. All candidates supported independence and the consolidation of Ukrainian statehood, building a democratic state based on rule of law and respect for human rights and liberties, especially of national minorities, which constitute nearly one-quarter of Ukraine's population. The candidates also agreed on developing a market-oriented economy, although there were differences among them as to the pace and scope of economic reforms. While rejecting any kind of control by the center, they recognized that maintaining some ties, especially economic ties, with the other republics of the former Soviet Union was necessary.

Candidates differed on whether Ukraine should be a federal republic, with Kravchuk envisioning Ukraine as 12 self-governing economic zones and not as a federated system, as many of the other candidates favored. Most candidates appeared to favor the notion of some local self-rule and of national-cultural autonomy for national minorities.

Kravchuk and His Rivals

In general, Ukraine's presidential election was a secondary concern for the electorate, which concentrated its efforts and hopes on holding an overwhelmingly successful independence referendum. Nevertheless, voters had clear preferences in a contest which centered not on programs but on the candidates' personalities and pasts. For many people, the decision ultimately came down to one question: would the Communist Party career of Leonid Kravchuk outweigh his political experience and reputation as a clever, pragmatic tactician -- featuring a transformation from Communist Party ideologue to Ukrainian nationalist -- and cause his defeat at the hands of the splintered but non-communist, democratic opposition that had fought the communists for years, even at the cost of prison and exile? As Vyacheslav Chornovil put it when asked what distinguished his platform from Kravchuk's, "almost nothing, except that my program is 30 years old and Kravchuk's is 3 months old."

But even supporters of other candidates acknowledged to Helsinki Commission staff that Kravchuk is a gifted politician who seemed to many voters the best choice in a complex transition period for Ukraine. His position as chairman of the republic's parliament allowed him to travel abroad and meet foreign leaders, including President Bush, and his association with Western heads of state raised his stock. On the other hand,

even Chornovil's staunchest adherents conceded that their candidate, while recognized as a popular and effective leader of Lviv oblast, is an emotional and sometimes impulsive individual, which certainly strengthened him during his years of dissidence but which may have seemed less than presidential. And finally, the inability of non-communist forces to consolidate and offer the voters one candidate against Kravchuk undoubtedly contributed to his victory. Chornovil conjectured that the sight of a splintered opposition made Kravchuk seem more "stable" to voters.

The Presidential Campaign

Ukraine has made notable strides in the conduct of campaigns since the March 1990 elections. All candidates had access to resources and to the media -- newspapers, radio, and republican television. Indeed, the Ukrainian media focused a great deal of attention on the candidates and their platforms.

Representatives of *Rukh* expressed mixed feelings over candidates' access to the republic-wide media, alleging that Kravchuk received considerably more exposure than any of the other candidates. (According to one study, Kravchuk and Agriculture Minister Tkachenko received 63 percent of the media coverage furnished to all the candidates, with the remainder going to the other five -- all of whom were members of the democratic opposition.) But *Rukh* spokesmen were generally pleased with the November 29 roundtable of the six remaining candidates on republic-wide television.

All candidates, especially the leading contenders, traveled around Ukraine promoting their respective candidacies. But Kravchuk benefited greatly from the natural advantages of incumbency, which afforded him constant media exposure and allowed him to travel all over Ukraine in his own airplane instead of relying on Aeroflot, and enabled him to exploit the infrastructure available to the chairman of the republic's parliament. At the same time, Vyacheslav Chornovil, Kravchuk's strongest rival, also made use of the advantages of being *Rukh*'s candidate, although his resources were dwarfed by Kravchuk's. Chornovil, who staged a particularly active campaign, traveled widely outside his power base in western Ukraine. In addition to promoting his own candidacy, he viewed his campaign as a vehicle in furthering the ideals of Ukrainian democratic independence, especially in areas where they were not firmly rooted. Chornovil also hoped, as a Radio Liberty analyst put it, to "set the record straight about the supposed radical Western Ukrainian nationalism that the Communist press had portrayed him as representing."

The Campaign for the Referendum

Rukh was especially active on the referendum question, with 10,000 - 20,000 activists, mostly from western Ukraine, traveling to the eastern and southern regions to advocate independence on a grass-roots level, including the distribution of millions of leaflets. They were joined by several dozen Ukrainian-Americans and Canadians. *Rukh*

observers characterized the campaign to Helsinki Commission staff as largely free and fair, although they noted irregularities in places such as Crimea and Mykolaiv, where some pro-independence literature was not permitted and where *Rukh* activists reportedly were refused entry. They noted that many of the old apparatchiks were still in place, obstructing the campaign efforts by democratic activists. There was also agitation against independence, especially from fledgling "interfronts" which called for secession from Ukraine in several regions in eastern and southern Ukraine. *Rukh* officials claimed that these efforts, led by a portion of the Russian intelligentsia, found minimal support among ethnic Russians.

Rukh representatives expressed particular satisfaction with media exposure on the question of the referendum on independence. Indeed, prior to and on the eve of the election, republican television and radio devoted a substantial amount of time to stressing the critical importance of a positive vote on independence (and pointing out Moscow's economic exploitation of Ukraine). Not surprisingly, the Ukrainian parliament, which had passed the August 24 independence declaration, was unabashed in its support for the referendum. *Holos Ukrainy* reported on November 28 that an appeal of the Presidium of the Parliament was sent to those oblasts with a large number of undecided voters urging citizens to vote for independence.

Military Participation in Voting

All residents of Ukraine over 18 years old could vote. The electorate also included Soviet military forces stationed in Ukraine, about whom the Presidium of Ukraine's Supreme Council issued a resolution in November permitting them to vote on December 1. Soldiers, irrespective of whether they were of Ukrainian origin, from Ukraine or other republics, did not have to vote but were free to participate.

The decision to grant all soldiers the vote was not as risky as might appear, given the large proportion of Ukrainians in the Soviet Army in Ukraine, and disenfranchising them could have been even more risky. As Chornovil noted in a December 1 interview with *Vysokii Zamok*, a Russian-language newspaper of the Lviv Oblast council, Ukrainian leaders pursued a careful policy of not alienating soldiers: "We cut short attempts to declare the army an occupation army and frequently spoke about [our] desire to strengthen social guarantees and do something practical [for the army]."

Observers

There were over 60 official observers from the United States, Canada, Western Europe, several republics of the former Soviet Union, neighboring states in eastern Europe, as well as a delegation of seven members of the European Parliament. Official observers from the United States included three Helsinki Commission staffers, two Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffers, and officials from the U.S. Consulate in Kiev, the

U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the Department of Defense. There were also dozens of non-governmental observers who received accreditation as international observers, including representatives of Ukrainian-American and Ukrainian-Canadian organizations, as well as members of non-governmental organizations, such as Harvard University's Project on Economic Reform in Ukraine. In addition, hundreds of reporters converged on Ukraine to observe and report on the voting.

The regulations permitted candidates, their authorized representatives, Ukrainian deputies, journalists, and representatives of work collectives, political parties and social movements to monitor the voting and vote count. According to *Rukh* representatives, some 20,000 Ukrainians from western Ukraine traveled to eastern Ukraine to observe the elections.

The Vote

Voter turnout was heavy (84 percent), reflecting the historic importance and the emotion of the event. The atmosphere in the polling stations was festive, especially in western Ukraine and in Kiev, yet not excessively so. Some voters waited in lines prior to the opening of the polls, eager to cast their ballots for a "free Ukraine." Popular focus was largely on the referendum as opposed to the presidential elections. Virtually every voter with whom Commission staff met claimed to have backed independence.

Voting procedures appeared to be consistent and the voting process smooth and, for the most part, well-run. Ballot boxes were sealed. Most polling stations had representatives from various political organizations. Voters entered the polling station and received the ballots after they showed their internal passports and signed a printed list of citizens who were registered on the voting lists. They would then enter the voting booth, where they would mark their ballots, then exit the booth and deposit their ballots into one box or two separate boxes (one for the referendum ballot and one for the presidential election). Polling stations also had additional, smaller ballot boxes for election officials (at least two) to take around to the residences of voters too ill or infirm to come to the polling station.

International observers, including Commission representatives, concluded that voting procedures by and large measured up to democratic standards and that the free and fair vote reflected the popular will. Representatives of the European Parliament, in a subsequent press conference, asserted that the vote reflected the true spirit of Ukraine and that all democracies should respect this expression of the will of the people.

There were some irregularities, to be sure, although observers concluded that these were generally a function of old, bad habits and an occasionally lax attitude on the part of election officials rather than any malicious intent to defraud. Violations witnessed by Commission staff who observed voting in the Kiev and Lviv regions and Kaniv (the burial

place of Ukraine's greatest poet, Taras Shevchenko) did not appear to be orchestrated. Such irregularities included: people in voting booths accompanied by others, mostly spouses; and people voting for others -- again, usually spouses -- upon presenting the spouse's internal passports. On a few occasions in small villages, people received ballots without being asked to show passports, although observers were told that there was no need to prove identification as everyone in the community knew each other. One U.S. monitor in Lviv observed a definite violation, when a member of a polling station counting the election ballots came upon a ballot with two names left blank -- and which therefore should have been invalid -- instead crossed out one candidate's name and left Chornovil's. When confronted, the vote counter said she was sure that such had been the voter's intention.

Unpleasant Incidents

According to officials of the Lviv oblast council, some *Rukh* observers sent to eastern and southern regions were not allowed to monitor the voting, and there were some cases of *Rukh* observers being beaten. *Ternopil Vechernіy* (December 4) reported that members of *Pamyat* (a Russian anti-Semitic organization) and other groups came to Kharkiv before December 1, hampered the distribution of materials supporting Chornovil and called for a boycott of the voting. According to the same source, some people distributing materials about Chornovil were attacked in Kharkiv.

Ukrainian television also reported on election night that explosives and grenades were uncovered in a Kiev synagogue, in an apparent attempt to inflame Ukrainian-Jewish relations and paint Ukrainians as anti-Semites in Western public opinion. Ukrainian television also displayed anti-independence leaflets, with a Moscow phone number appended for further information, that had been distributed in Kiev. Local sources described both incidents as blatant provocations hoping to play on inter-ethnic anxieties.

The Count and Results

The local vote counts commenced following the 8 p.m. closing of the polls. Ballots were counted at each polling station and the results passed on to the twenty-seven district commissions. These respective commissions prepared protocols and sent them to the Central Electoral Commission in Kiev for the final tally.

On December 4, the Central Electoral Commission released the final results of the referendum and presidential election. Support for Ukrainian independence exceeded even the most optimistic poll projections and expectations by Ukrainian nationalists, with even the more Russified east and south voting overwhelmingly for independence. Of the 84.1 percent of the eligible voters -- some 32 million people -- voting in the referendum, fully 90.3 percent supported the August 24 declaration of independence. The vote against independence was 7.6 percent, and 2.1 percent of the ballots cast were invalid. All in all,

over three-quarters of all eligible voters in Ukraine chose independence.

A plurality in every region in Ukraine, including Crimea, voted for independence. Support ranged from over 95 percent in western Ukraine and the Kiev oblast to 54 percent in Crimea, where ethnic Russians form a substantial majority of the population. Significantly, in industrialized but Russified eastern oblasts such as Donetsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhye, as well as in the southern Black Sea oblasts of Odessa, Mykolaiv and Kherson, the vote for independence exceeded 80 percent in each oblast. Two-thirds of the estimated 1.2 million Soviet military personnel stationed on Ukrainian territory backed independence.

Leonid Kravchuk handily won the presidency, with 61.59 percent of the vote. The results demonstrated that Kravchuk had convinced the electorate of his abilities, if not necessarily the sincerity of his transformation. Kravchuk gained majorities in all but four of the 25 oblasts. The runner-up, Vyacheslav Chornovil, was a distant second, winning 23.27 percent of the vote. In Lviv, where he was the native son and popular favorite, many expected a second round run-off election between Kravchuk and Chornovil but Kravchuk's margin of victory surprised observers and dashed any such hopes.

Not surprisingly, given Chornovil's reputation as a lifelong fighter for Ukrainian independence and his power base in Lviv oblast, his campaign was most successful in the three western oblasts of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil, where he easily won majorities. Chornovil was followed by Levko Lukianenko (4.5 percent), whose strongest support was also in western Ukraine; Volodymyr Gryniov (4.2 percent), whose best showing was in the eastern oblasts of Donetsk and his native Kharkiv; Ihor Yukhnovsky (1.74 percent); and Leopold Taburiansky (0.57 percent). The total vote for candidates from the democratic opposition of Ukraine's parliament -- Chornovil, Lukianenko, Gryniov and Yukhnovsky -- amounted to one-third of the total votes cast.

The mood of the populace both on election day and following the results can best be characterized as one of quiet pride. Commission staff spoke to voters who had spent years in Siberia and who wept as they described their happiness at having lived to see the day and their grief over family and friends who did not. Voters recognized that they have finally realized their age-old dream of independence, and that they achieved this through democratic, peaceful means. At the same time, they appreciated the difficulties that lie ahead, especially in the economic sphere, and appeared to realize that formidable tasks lie ahead in building on the ruins of the discredited empire a fully democratic state based on the rule of law.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF UKRAINE'S REFERENDUM/ELECTION

On its most basic level, Ukraine's independence represents the triumph of a people's national consciousness and the fulfillment of hopes nurtured for centuries, despite denationalizing and sometimes murderous campaigns by Russian and Soviet leaders determined to keep the rich Ukraine under Russian control. At the same time, Ukraine's determined but peaceful path to independence thus far fosters optimism about its future progress towards democracy, a free market system and not least, Western political recognition and economic investment. Considering the nightmare scenarios some Western analysts and high-ranking officials had projected about the critical importance of Ukraine in the breakup of the Soviet Union, the republic's emergence into the international community has been remarkably orderly. Nevertheless, Ukraine faces many challenges on the path to democracy, stability, free markets and good relations with its neighbors. For the West, the presence of a large new state in Europe with its own security agenda and foreign policy priorities raises many pressing questions and issues.

Ukrainian Independence and International Security

Undoubtedly, the number one question on the minds of Western governments relates to the nuclear weapons on Ukraine's territory, which raise concerns about nuclear proliferation and loss of control over weapons of mass destruction. After a series of occasionally contradictory signals from Ukraine about the republic's intentions with respect to nuclear weapons, Leonid Kravchuk assured U.S. Secretary of State James Baker on December 18 that Ukraine would be nuclear-free, and requested U.S. assistance in dismantling strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.

Baker later said that Kravchuk's pledge was reassuring. But if the other nuclear-armed former Soviet republics maintain their forces, Ukraine might be tempted not to disarm or to slow down the tempo towards disarmament. Yet Russia will be hesitant to give up its nuclear weapons and status as a military superpower, especially considering its long border with China. The logic of nuclear deterrence, which many credit for having kept the peace during the Cold War between East and West, may seem equally persuasive to newly independent republics surrounded by potential aggressors.

Similar dilemmas could surround the conventional aspects of military security in the new Europe. The Warsaw Pact which negotiated the CFE treaty no longer exists, but Western CSCE states insist on the continuing validity of the agreement, even though the central Soviet government is defunct. But Ukraine, which has pledged adherence to the treaty's provision's on reductions in forces, will have to work out with its neighbors how to divide these cuts. This could complicate Ukraine's stated intention of creating its own military force; Ukrainian leaders originally spoke of an army of up to 450,000 -- which, while a significant drop from the current levels of Soviet forces in the republic, nevertheless evoked expressions of alarm from some Western states, and Ukrainian

projections on the size of their army have recently dropped substantially.

Security arrangements that address anxieties about nuclear proliferation, yet meet the security concerns of newly independent republics will be a top priority. Much good will on all sides will be needed in upcoming negotiations, considering that the prospects for recreating a unified military command of forces from all former Soviet republics are unclear.

Ukraine's Relations With Its Neighbors

Western insistence on Ukrainian adherence to human rights commitments stems not only from positions of principle but also from concern with maintaining stability through respecting the rights of Ukraine's minorities, especially the sizeable Russian community. In August, a Russian Government spokesman publicly spoke of possible Russian territorial claims against Ukraine (and other independence-bound republics with large concentrations of Russians). But on August 29, Ukraine and Russia signed an agreement pledging cooperation, respecting each other's rights to state independence and each other's territorial integrity. On October 29, the two republics signed a protocol in which Russia blessed Ukraine's drive for independence in exchange for guarantees of the rights of the Russian minority in Ukraine. Both states also reiterated their intention to push for speedy ratification of the START treaty and the CFE agreement on conventional forces in Europe but insisted on direct participation in the enactment of these talks. At present, therefore, despite unsettling disparities in official Russian and Ukrainian statements over Ukraine's willingness to participate in a unified military structure, relations between these two giants are at least stable.

Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the former Soviet republics of Belarus and Moldova could also raise questions with Ukraine about borders, as Ukraine could with some of them. To date, only Romania has done so, questioning the incorporation into Ukraine of northern Bukovina and southern Bessarabia after the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The other countries in question may have concluded, after talks with Ukrainian representatives, that raising border claims is a Pandora's Box. In fact, Poland and Hungary vied with each other to be the first to recognize Ukraine after the referendum, followed by Ukraine's other neighbors. Romania, however, did so with reservations linked to ambitions on the territories mentioned above.

Thus, the countries of the region were content to watch and wait as a large and powerful neighbor is born, while trying to prevent areas of disagreement from coming to the fore. They have also expressed interest in bringing Ukraine under the commitments of multilateral fora such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) as soon as possible.

Ukraine and the West

Western countries, for their part, grappled with concerns about regional instability, loss of centralized command and control of nuclear weapons, and a general disquiet about what would eventually emerge. A rather active Ukrainian foreign policy prior to the referendum attempted to allay some of these concerns and underscore Ukraine's commitments to becoming a nuclear-free, non-threatening international partner which respected human rights, particularly the rights of national minorities.

The West greeted positively the results of the referendum; President Bush called President Kravchuk to congratulate him and the White House welcomed "this expression of democracy which is a tribute to the spirit of the Ukrainian people." Canada, with its large Ukrainian population, was the only Western country immediately to recognize Ukraine. The European Community welcomed "the democratic manner in which the Ukrainian people declared their wish for their republic to attain full sovereignty," and went on to discuss Ukrainian obligations.

Domestic Politics in Ukraine

Kravchuk, Parliament and Society: Supporters of other candidates viewed Kravchuk's victory as not a serious blow, primarily because they were more concerned about the outcome of the independence referendum but also because they understood that Kravchuk will be under constant surveillance and pressure from his defeated opponents to pursue an undeviating course towards independence. Conceivably, in fact, Kravchuk might feel constrained to be less open to compromises on this front than other candidates with more solidly nationalist credentials. Of greater concern to those who did not back Kravchuk was the possibility that with him at the helm, Ukraine might not proceed with the necessary speed towards real economic reform.

For this reason, many in the democratic opposition urge quick parliamentary elections to replace the deputies elected in March 1990. As *Rukh* activist and Ukrainian Supreme Council deputy Volodymyr Yavorivsky told *Vysokii Zamok* on December 3, how could one expect a critically important land reform to issue from a Supreme Soviet, one-third of whose members are chairmen of kolkhozes? Chornovil, who noted concerns that Kravchuk's victory could animate conservatives in the republic's parliament, went even further in the same newspaper by calling for discussion of the Supreme Soviet's immediate dissolution and the election of professional legislators.

Opinion among Ukrainian analysts who spoke to Helsinki Commission staff was divided about the prospects for quick parliamentary elections. Some speculated that Kravchuk might instead prefer to leave the parliament alone and install reformers in the executive branch of government, especially the cabinet of ministers. In any case, many people interviewed took a somewhat cynical approach to their new president and his policy

options, arguing that in such difficult, transitional times, it was better to have a clever operator as head of state, while his more principled opponents kept a careful eye on his actions -- or non-actions.

On the other hand, one reason for Kravchuk's large margin of victory may have been popular perceptions that he would proceed more cautiously with painful economic reforms than his opponents. The next few months will reveal whether the majority of Ukraine's residents support the radical economic reforms demanded by Chornovil and others. If so, new elections may also be necessary to lower level soviets, where, according to Yavorivsky, many former Communist Party bosses have established new footholds, or remained entrenched.

Ukraine's Military Forces: Soon after the birth of Commonwealth of Independent States, Leonid Kravchuk named himself commander in chief of the Soviet army stationed in Ukraine, and the Supreme Council approved a proposal to form a Ukrainian army out of these forces. These actions place in serious doubt Boris Yeltsin's assertions that Ukraine finds acceptable a unified military structure for the Commonwealth.

Assuming a Ukrainian army is established, the republic will have to decide many difficult issues: how large it will be, how much of the new republic's budget to allocate for military expenses, whether the army will be composed only of residents --or maybe only citizens -- of Ukraine, whether soldiers will be draftees or volunteers, how much to pay them, whether soldiers may serve outside of Ukraine, and whether the creation of a Ukrainian army rules out Ukrainian participation in Commonwealth military forces (if they are formed). Another important priority will involve proceeding with conversion to civilian purposes of the large military-industrial complex in Ukraine. Finally, while discussion in the West of Ukraine's army has focused on numbers and its possible integration into a unified command with other republics of the Commonwealth, independent Ukraine will also have to develop its own military doctrine.

Economic Reform: Ukraine is rich in resources and has tremendous economic potential, but the republic's economy has been devastated by decades of Soviet centralization and mismanagement. An urgent priority issue for Ukraine are market reforms and privatization of the economy.

In a November 30 interview with *Vysokii Zamok*, Leonid Kravchuk's economic advisor, Vladimir Naumenko, explained that Ukraine would pursue a reform in which all forms of property -- state, private, cooperative -- are juridically equal. He said the market would determine prices, except on certain consumer goods, which the state would continue to subsidize for a transition period of 1 to 3 years. Every citizen of Ukraine, Naumenko continued, would receive a share of property, worth about 4,300 rubles, and all other state property would be sold. As for a separate currency, despite optimistic projections about the introduction of the *hrivna* by 1992, he forecast that Ukraine would have a monetary

unit of its own fairly soon but would not have a convertible currency for several years. Finally, he promised very favorable circumstances for investors, both native and foreign.

Another key reform will involve privatization in the agricultural sector. Breaking up collective farms has thus far been hindered by several factors, including the continued influence of entrenched kolkhoz chairmen who impede efforts by individual farmers to privatize, and the lack of appropriate farm technology.

Given the close links between Ukraine and the rest of the former USSR, the republic will have to come to terms with other former republics, perhaps concluding an economic treaty. One likely consequence will be continued problems with energy, given Ukraine's promise to dismantle nuclear power plants (another legacy of Chernobyl) as well as its dependence on Russian fuel.

Previous experience has shown that social problems and tensions are aggravated by the strains of marketizing a socialist economy. Ukraine's leaders will have to try to minimize the effects on society, especially for people on low or fixed incomes, of ending subsidies and eliminating unproductive and unprofitable enterprises.

Inter-Ethnic Relations: The surprisingly high pro-independence vote in the eastern, Russianized regions of Ukraine and the support of many other non-Ukrainians for independence allayed fears about the possibility of inter-ethnic divisions and strife, which have so far not been a serious issue in Ukraine (as opposed to many other former Soviet republics). Ukraine's democratic opposition movement has been scrupulously careful in inter-ethnic issues, and the results of the December 1 voting among non-Ukrainians were their reward. The pro-independence vote among non-Ukrainians was also to some extent certainly due to generalized disgust with the Soviet Union and a widespread feeling that life, including possibilities of national self-expression, could hardly be worse in an independent Ukraine. On the other hand, Russians in Ukraine could not have helped knowing that if they did not vote for independence, Ukrainians might have held it against them, which could have heightened the chances of Russian-Ukrainian confrontation.

A critical variable in this delicate equation will be how newly independent Ukraine treats questions of language. The Ukrainian press, including the official paper of the Lviv Oblast Council and *Pravda Ukrainy*, the successor to the Communist Party organ, printed letters from non-Ukrainians who voiced support for Ukrainian independence but urged a slow, circumspect approach to a linguistic reform that eschewed even the appearance of compulsion. A representative of the Polish national cultural society added that national minorities would be greatly reassured by the passage of a law guaranteeing their rights (Ukraine's Supreme Council has yet to pass such legislation).

A complicating factor is that centuries of Russianization have produced many Ukrainians, especially in the republic's eastern regions, who claim Russian as their native

language or who know Ukrainian badly if at all. The leaders of the newly independent republic will therefore have to put nation-building, as well as state-building, on their agenda, and this may cause problems with non-Ukrainians if pursued too vigorously and quickly, especially in the sphere of language.

Based on statements and actions to date, however, Ukraine's leaders understand well the delicacy and significance of ethnic politics and they have the woeful example of other former Soviet republics, not to speak of Yugoslavia, as a negative model. On November 1, Ukraine's parliament issued a declaration guaranteeing equal political, economic, social and cultural rights to all individuals and nationalities in Ukraine. The declaration also promised coequal status with Ukrainian to languages of nationalities residing compactly in particular regions, as well as guaranteeing the rights of nationalities to use their languages in all aspects of social life. This declaration of principles will probably find expression in a future law on national minorities and strict implementation of such legislation will go a long way towards reassuring Russia and the West, as well as national minorities in Ukraine.

Inter-Confessional Conflict: If inter-ethnic relations have so far failed to cause serious problems in Ukraine, inter-denominational confrontations have been a source of concern about future domestic tranquility. There are few deep divisions over doctrine and faith among Ukraine's three largest Christian denominations -- the Ukrainian Catholic, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox and the Ukrainian Orthodox (formerly, Russian Orthodox) church -- and all came out in support of independence. But these three churches have been locked in conflict over turf and property claims, as formerly nationalized property is returned to believers. The tensions between the two indigenous Ukrainian churches (Catholic and Autocephalous Orthodox), on the one hand, and the Ukrainian (formerly, Russian) Orthodox Church, on the other hand, have been exacerbated by the perception that the latter is really an instrument of Moscow and the Russian Orthodox Church.

It is unclear how relations among these competing organizations will develop. The building of new churches may reduce the acuteness of battles over property, while the role of the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Churches as the repositories of Ukrainian national feeling could ebb as other institutions and the state increasingly take on this role. Conversely, though, the growing concentration of churches on purely denominational matters could aggravate existing tensions and grievances in an atmosphere of competition for members, against a background of friction between the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Orthodox bishops recently refused to attend a Vatican assembly that discussed evangelizing the formerly communist countries of Europe, complaining about Catholic invasion of Orthodox "territory."

Ukraine's leaders will certainly want to help to reduce tensions among the republic's religious bodies. But a newly independent and secular state intent on adhering to rule of

law principles will have to be careful not to interfere in clerical disputes.

Local Government and Autonomy: If Ukrainian complaints about centralized rule from Moscow are now a thing of the past, regions and cities outside the capital may soon begin grumbling about centralized rule from Kiev. Ukrainians in Lviv blamed the failure of the republic parliament in Kiev to pass a law on privatization for the absence of privately-owned or -run establishments in Lviv. When asked why Lviv authorities had to wait for legislative initiatives on economic reform from Kiev, they seemed nonplussed and uncomprehending.

There may indeed be good reasons for economic reform to be introduced uniformly all over a republic as large as Ukraine: for example, freeing prices on goods in one region would send consumers to areas where low state-subsidized prices remained in effect. But there are differences among Ukraine's regions, both in objective level of development and popular attitudes, and legislators might take these differences into account when deliberating economic and administrative reforms. In any case, competing claims for jurisdiction between regional and local authorities vis-a-vis Kiev may soon erupt, especially if the Supreme Council dallies with economic reform, to the great displeasure of many in western Ukraine. At the same time, allowing greater local autonomy could also help resolve problems that currently have a primarily national tinge, such as in Crimea or Trans-Carpathia, as Vyacheslav Chornovil projected to *Vysokii Zamok* on November 30. Satisfying Odessa's desire to become a free economic zone could be another case in point.

In this connection, there were several local polls on December 1 which reflected regional issues connected with the status of national minorities. In the Transcarpathian region in western Ukraine, which borders on Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, has a significant Hungarian and other minority populations, and where 92.5 percent of those voting backed Ukrainian independence, 78 percent also favored the idea of their oblast becoming a "special self-governing territory" within Ukraine. Radio Liberty reported that over 80 percent of the largely ethnic Hungarian Berehovo district voted in a special poll to give their locality the status of a special "national district." And while voters in Chernivtsy oblast backed Ukrainian independence by a 92.8 percent margin, according to Radio Liberty, ethnic Romanians are reported to have boycotted the referendum in several villages. The oblast is one of the areas on which Romania has indicated territorial claims.

Perhaps the most problematic issue from the standpoint of maintaining Ukraine's territorial integrity is the Crimean issue. While the predominantly Russian population of Crimea voted on December 1 to support Ukrainian independence by a narrow margin (54 percent), on the eve of the referendum Crimea's parliament passed a referendum law which could pave the way to a possible vote on secession from Ukraine. During the last few years, there have been various movements in Crimea advocating secession or joining Russia. Crimea's current status is somewhat unclear: in a controversial referendum in January 1991, an overwhelming majority of the Crimean populace approved a proposal to

reestablish a Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Since then, Crimea has been an autonomous republic, but within Ukraine, and its future status may be a subject of contention.

Implications for the United States

Before the referendum, there had been a growing momentum for recognition of Ukraine in the United States. A Senate resolution to this effect introduced by Helsinki Commission Co-Chairman Dennis DeConcini passed on November 22, and President Bush told Ukrainian-American leaders that he would salute Ukrainian independence and take steps towards recognition. The administration subsequently back-pedaled on immediate recognition, however, and indicated that political recognition of Ukraine is conditional on satisfactory implementation of arms control agreements, debt repayment, human rights, including protection of minorities, and economic reform. The overwhelmingly pro-independence result of the referendum and the talks between James Baker and Leonid Kravchuk in Kiev on December 18 appear to have eased and speeded the way to U.S. recognition in the near term, with Baker indicating that a U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine will be named soon.

Security threats to the United States from the former Soviet Union had practically disappeared long before December 1. But Ukraine's independence could help shore up America's enhanced security. An independent Ukraine which has met U.S. conditions would be for the United States an important country in a region of Europe undergoing the difficult transition to democratic, free market systems. Good U.S. relations with Ukraine, a large, populous and potentially prosperous state, would help stabilize the entire region. Mutually beneficial U.S.-Ukrainian ties would also serve as a model for U.S. relations with Russia, where ethnic conflicts and economic travails will make the transition away from centralized rule and socialist economics even more rocky.

At the same time, all the states in the region will probably look to the United States -- the only remaining superpower and the country they are most likely to trust as a source of advice, expertise and technical assistance on issues ranging from military security to price formation to the development of democratic institutions, including constitutions and human rights. The large numbers of Ukrainians in the United States (and Canada) constitute an invaluable asset for Ukraine, both as a source of volunteers and advisors to the fledgling state and for their influence on U.S. (and Canadian) policymakers.

The emergence of an independent Ukraine through peaceful and democratic means has clearly been in accordance with values that the United States has always propounded. The U.S. decision to recognize Ukraine signals a coincidence of basic principles between these two countries, as well as an acknowledgement of political realities.